DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 410 179 SO 028 404

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TITLE	The Framework for the National Assessment of Educational Progress in Civics. ERIC Digest.
INSTITUTION	ERIC Clearinghouse for Social Studies/Social Science Education, Bloomington, IN.
SPONS AGENCY	Office of Educational Research and Improvement (ED), Washington, DC.
REPORT NO	EDO-SO-97-8
PUB DATE	May 97
NOTE	4p.
CONTRACT	RR93002014
AVAILABLE FROM	ERIC Clearinghouse for Social Studies/Social Science Education, 2805 East Tenth Street, Suite 120, Indiana University, Bloomington, IN 47408.
PUB TYPE	ERIC Publications (071)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Academic Standards; Citizenship Education; *Civics; Curriculum Development; Democracy; Democratic Values; *Educational Objectives; Elementary Secondary Education; Instructional Development; Political Science; Theory Practice Relationship; *United States Government (Course)
IDENTIFIERS	ERIC Digests; *National Assessment of Educational Progress

ABSTRACT

This digest briefly summarizes the contents of the "Civics Framework for the 1998 National Assessment of Educational Progress" in terms of the Framework's development and components including civic knowledge, civic skills, and civic dispositions. The framework may be used to inform and guide curriculum development projects in civics and government for elementary and secondary schools. The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), a survey mandated by the U.S. Congress, collects and reports information about student achievement in academic subjects such as mathematics, science, reading, writing, history, geography, and civics. The NAEP is a broad indicator of how much and how well students are learning core subjects of the school curriculum. The next National Assessment of Educational Progress in civics and government will be administered in 1998. (CB)

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THE FRAMEWORK FOR THE NATIONAL ASSESSMENT OF EDUCATIONAL PROGRESS IN CIVICS

ED 410 179

ERIC DIGEST
EDO-SO-97-8

BY JOHN J. PATRICK

ERIC CLEARINGHOUSE FOR SOCIAL STUDIES/SOCIAL SCIENCE EDUCATION

MAY 1997

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EDO-SO-97-8 May 1997

The Framework for the National Assessment of Educational Progress in Civics

by John J. Patrick

The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), a survey mandated by the United States Congress, collects and reports information about student achievement in various academic subjects such as mathematics, science, reading, writing, history, geography, and civics. The NAEP is not a national test; rather, it is a broad indicator of how much and how well students are learning core subjects of the school curriculum. The first National Assessments of Educational Progress, conducted in 1969-1970, were in science, writing, and citizenship or civics. In 1988, there was a NAEP in civics and government, the results of which were reported to the public in *The Civics Report Card* (Anderson and Others 1990). In 1998, the next National Assessment of Educational Progress in civics and government will be administered.

This Digest briefly summarizes the contents of the *Civics Framework for the 1998 National Assessment of Educational Progress*. This document can be obtained from the U.S. Department of Education or the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS). For further information, contact the National Assessment Governing Board (NAGB): 800 North Capitol Street, N.W., Washington, DC 20002; http://www.nagb.org.

Development of the Framework. The first phase of the 1998 NAEP in civics was the development during 1995-1996 of a framework to:

- Specify the civic knowledge and skills that students should possess at grades four, eight, and twelve.
- Describe the desired characteristics of the 1998 assessment of civics.
- Present preliminary descriptions of the three levels of achievement — *basic, proficient,* and *advanced* — by which students' performance should be judged and reported in the assessment.

The framework for the 1998 NAEP in civics was developed through a national consensus-building process that involved a steering committee, planning committee, and project management team. The steering committee — made up of representatives of major education and policy organizations and of business and government — oversaw and guided the development of the framework. The planning committee — composed of teachers, scholars, curriculum specialists, teacher educators, assessment experts, and lay people — created this framework. The management team administered and supervised the work of the project.

The project staff received advice about the framework from public hearings, student forums, and written reviews by various educators, scholars, and other interested citizens. Final review and action on the framework was the prerogative of the National Assessment Governing Board (NAGB), which is authorized by Congress to determine the content of the NAEP.

The assessment framework is the foundation for subsequent phases of the 1998 NAEP in civics, and assessment items have been developed in accordance with it. These items will be administered in 1998 to representative samples of students at grades four, eight, and twelve throughout the United States. Interpretation of responses to the assessment items will be guided by the framework. Finally, the report to the American public of the assessment findings in the year 2000 will be based on the framework.

Components of the Framework. The framework for the 1998 NAEP in civics is based on the *National Standards for Civics and Government* developed and published in 1994 by the Center for Civic Education.

At the core of this assessment framework are three interrelated components: knowledge, intellectual and participatory skills, and civic dispositions. In concert, these components should be the essential elements of civic education in the United States of America. Therefore, the NAEP in civics will treat students' achievement of these three connected components of civic education.

Civic Knowledge. The civic knowledge component is embodied in five fundamental and enduring questions:

- What are civic life, politics, and government?
- What are the foundations of the American political system?
- How does the government established by the Constitution embody the purposes, values, and principles of American democracy?
- What is the relationship of the United States to other nations and to world affairs?
- What are the roles of citizens in American democracy?

These essential content questions are taken from the *National Standards for Civics and Government*. They denote basic concepts on the theory and practice of constitutional democracy in the United States, which students must know to become informed and responsible citizens.

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Civic Skills. Intellectual and participatory skills involve the use of knowledge to respond effectively and responsibly to the challenges of civic life in a constitutional democracy. Intellectual skills enable students to learn and apply civic knowledge in the many and varied roles of citizens. These skills help citizens identify, describe, explain, and analyze information and arguments, as well as evaluate, take, and defend positions on public issues. Participatory skills enable citizens to monitor and influence public and civic life by working with others, clearly articulating ideas and interests, building coalitions, negotiating compromises, and managing conflicts.

Civic Dispositions. The third component of this framework, civic dispositions, refers to the inclinations or "habits of the heart," as Alexis de Tocqueville called them, that pervade all aspects of citizenship. In a constitutional democracy, these dispositions pertain to the rights and responsibilities of individuals in society and to the advancement of the ideals of the polity. They include the dispositions to become an independent member of society; to respect individual worth and human dignity; to assume the personal, political, and economic responsibilities of a citizen; to participate in civic affairs in an informed, thoughtful, and effective manner; and to promote the healthy functioning of American constitutional democracy.

The 1998 NAEP in civics, in accord with NAGB policy, will treat only the knowledge and intellectual skills facets of the framework. The framework, however, exemplifies in its fullness what civic education should be. Thus, participatory skills and civic disposition in combination with essential civic knowledge and intellectual skills constitute a complete conception of civic education, which is a model for American students and their teachers.

Conclusion. The design of the framework of the 1998 NAEP in civics, while maintaining some conceptual continuity with the 1988 NAEP in civics, reflects current reforms in civic education. It is consistent with the *National Standards for Civics and Government*. Therefore, this framework, although primarily intended as the foundation for the 1998 NAEP in civics, may also be used to inform and guide curriculum development projects in civics and government for elementary and secondary schools. Students who master the knowledge and skills outlined in this framework document will have a greater sense of the effective and responsible roles they can play as citizens of the United States of America.

A constitutional democracy, such as the United States of America, requires informed, effective, and responsible citizens for its maintenance and improvement. If the polity would survive and thrive, citizens must have knowledge of its principles and institutions, skills in applying this knowledge to civic life, and dispositions that incline them to protect individual rights and promote the common good. Therefore, sound civic education, the effective preparation of citizens to fulfill their responsibilities to sustain and enhance self-government, is an essential condition of an enduring constitutional democracy.

References and ERIC Resources. The following list of resources includes references used to prepare this Digest. The items followed by an ED number are available in microfiche and/or paper copies from the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS). For information about prices, contact EDRS, 7420 Fullerton Road, Suite 110, Springfield, Virginia 22153-2852; telephone numbers are (703) 440-1400 and (800) 443-3742. Entries followed by an EJ number, annotated monthly in CURRENT INDEX TO JOURNALS IN EDUCATION (CIJE), are not available through EDRS. However, they can be located in the journal section of most larger libraries by using the bibliographic information provided, requested through Interlibrary Loan, or ordered from commercial reprint services.

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This publication was prepared with funding from the Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education, under contract RR93002014. The opinions expressed do not necessarily reflect the positions or policies of OERI or ED.

This Digest is based on the *Civics Framework for the 1998 National Assessment of Educational Progress* and includes paraphrases and sentences taken from the Executive Summary of this document.